

TOPIC: DEGREE AUTHORIZATION ACT – WESTWOOD COLLEGE

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I. SUMMARY

This item recommends a status change under the Degree Authorization Act for Westwood College from “Full Authorization” to “Probationary Authorization” due to a change in accreditation status.

II. BACKGROUND

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) has statutory responsibility for administration of Title 23, Article 2 of the Colorado Revised Statutes, commonly referred to as the Degree Authorization Act, which sets out the terms under which certain types of institutions¹ may offer degrees or degree credits.

All private colleges and universities, out-of-state public colleges and universities, seminaries and bible colleges are required to register with the Colorado Department of Higher Education and to meet criteria in CCHE Policy Section I Part J, Degree Authorization Act, in order to have authorization to offer degrees within Colorado. Such authorization must be received by the institution prior to: offering any program of instruction, academic credits, or degrees; opening a place of business; soliciting students or enrollees; or offering educational support services.

The Commission administers the Degree Authorization Act by determining an institution’s eligibility to operate pursuant to statute and CCHE policy. Policy requires Commission action for institutions to be authorized at any level and for any change to authorization status.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

In February 1994 the Denver Institute of Technology was granted authorization as a “private college or university” under the Degree Authorization Act. In March of 2001, the Denver Institute of Technology changed its name to Westwood College of Technology and subsequently to Westwood College. Currently, there are three campuses in Colorado under the Westwood College degree granting authority: Denver North, Denver South, and Westwood College Online.

Department staff received notification from the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) regarding its decision to place Westwood College’s Denver North campus on probation. The ACCSC has provided the institution with a Summary of Grounds for Probation.

¹ (1) Colorado publicly supported colleges and universities; (2) properly accredited private colleges and universities; (3) postsecondary seminaries and bible colleges; and (4) private occupational schools authorized by the Division of Private Occupational Schools.

Pursuant to C.R.S. 23-2-103.5(5)(b), “The commission may place the private college or university on probationary status if the commission finds the private college or university has been placed on probation or the equivalent by an accrediting agency.”

Westwood College is required to respond to the ACCSC Summary of Grounds for Probation for review by ACCSC’s November 2010 meeting. Westwood College will be required to provide this response to the Department by December 15, 2010. The Commission will have opportunity to review the response at its January 2011 meeting. Pending the results from the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges in November, if Westwood College – Denver North is reinstated by the ACCSC in good standing, Department staff may make a recommendation to CCHE to change the status of Westwood College back to Full Authorization.

Pursuant to C.R.S. 23-2-103.3 (5) (a) (b), the Colorado Commission on Higher Education has the following options:

- The commission may order the department for cause, to review a private college or university, bible college, or seminary to determine whether to revoke the private college’s or university’s, bible college’s, or seminary’s authorization or to place it on probationary status. A review conducted pursuant to subsection (5) shall ensure that the private college or university...meets the requirements adopted pursuant to this article.
- The commission may place the private college or university on probationary status if the commission finds the private college or university has been placed on probation or the equivalent by an accrediting agency.
- The commission may defer until the November ACCSC meeting and review the outcome.
- The commission may take no action.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Commission change the status of Westwood College from Full Authorization to Probationary Authorization in response to the accreditation body’s probation order.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-2-103.3 (5) (a)
C.R.S. §23-2-103.3 (5) (b)